

## **Improving Safety, Permanence and Well-being for Wisconsin Children at Risk of Abuse and Neglect**

### **Values:**

- We care about the safety of our children, permanence, and stability in their lives and their essential well being. We are committed to a statewide process of dialog, exchange, and change on behalf of children.
- We must ask ourselves critical questions about why we are doing what we are doing in the way in which we are doing it, and this discussion should be ongoing.
- One important part of that process is the upcoming federal Children and Family Service Review (CFSR) of Wisconsin's child welfare system. It creates a baseline for future measurements of the safety, stability and permanence of families in Wisconsin. It is more than we have known before.

### **Expectations:**

- Improvements in Wisconsin's child welfare services have been important but there is much work to be done.
- In the immediate future, Wisconsin will join at least 32 states that have received their federally mandated CFSR. We know that, like every state that has gone before us, we too will be found most of the seven outcomes and some of the seven systemic factors on which we will be evaluated. We will submit a Program Enhancement Plan in December of 2003 that contains performance targets toward which we must make substantial progress within two years. To fail is to face financial penalties that range from one to three percent of our federal funding in child welfare for each area in which sufficient improvement is lacking.
- Our children need our unified commitment to success—in this and all efforts to improve child safety, permanence, and well being.

### **Process:**

- Wisconsin's county-operated; state-supervised system makes counties and the state essential partners in improving child welfare.
- Strengthening relationships between key stakeholders will further successful implementation.
- Success depends upon inclusion of key stakeholders (such as counties, the courts, law enforcement, health care providers, faith leadership, treatment providers, community foundations, educators, and others).
- Discussion and respectful debate, creative thinking, flexibility, and consensus building will result in decisions that most people can and want to support.

### **In 2001:**

- 71 counties conducted self-assessments.
- Executive Steering Committee was formed.

**In 2002:**

- Several counties participated in "mock reviews."
- The statewide self-assessment was compiled.
- Negotiated data sources and methods in preparation for the federal review.

**In 2003:**

- Results of statewide self-assessment submitted to the Feds (June).
- Met with counties, legislators, and media to brief on challenges in child welfare (July/Aug).
- Host the federal review of cases in Milwaukee, Outagamie, and Kenosha counties (August).
- Feds issue their findings of Wisconsin's performance (September).
- Wisconsin develops the Program Enhancement Plan for the federal review. Enlists a multidisciplinary, statewide dialog on opportunities for improving responses to children and families and enhancing safety and well being (August – December).

**In 2004:**

- Implement the federal Program Enhancement Plan and continue development of Wisconsin strategies for improvement

**Resources:**

Effective approaches to program improvement may include any combination of:

- Clarification of philosophy and values
- Revised approaches to child welfare practices (best county practices and lessons from other states)
- Improvements in data collection and reporting
- Reprioritization of effort
- More effective county/state communication – and between all who work to keep children safe
- Financial investment (recognizing the current budget environment and as resources allow)
- Technical assistance and professional education
- Changes in statutes and administrative rules
- More effective public education about the status of children and their needs